

# Technology Plan Requirements for E-Rate

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If a library is applying for E-Rate support for Priority 2 services (Internal Connections and Basic Maintenance of Internal Connections) it must have a technology plan approved by a USAC-certified Technology Plan Approver. This is to ensure that libraries are prepared to effectively use the requested services. The technology plans must include provisions for integrating telecommunication services and Internet access into their programs and services.

*To be approved a technology plan must include the following elements:*

- The plan must establish clear goals and a realistic strategy for using telecommunications and information technology to improve education or library services;
- The plan must have a professional development strategy to ensure that staff know how to use these new technologies to improve education or library services;
- The plan must include an assessment of the telecommunication services, hardware, software, and other services that will be needed to improve education or library services; and
- The plan must include an evaluation process that enables the school or library to monitor progress toward the specified goals and make mid-course corrections in response to new developments and opportunities and they arise.
- [Beginning with FY2011, this element is not required] The plan must provide a sufficient budget to acquire and support the non-discounted elements of the plan: the hardware, software, professional development and other services that will be needed to implement the strategy.

## Timeline

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A technology plan does not have to be approved before the Form 470 is filed, BUT a technology plan must be written – including all required elements – at the time the Form 470 is filed.

The technology plan must be approved by a USAC-certified Technology Plan Approver **before the start of service or the filing of the FCC Form 486, whichever is earlier**. Applicants are required to formally certify on the Form 486 that the technology plans on which they based their purchases were approved before they began to receive service.

**Keep in mind, the approval process can take 4-6 weeks.** If a library's technology plan does not meet the required criteria for approval the library will need to revise and resubmit for approval.

## Scope

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Technology plans should cover the entire funding year that you are applying for, but no more than three (3) years. The E-Rate funding period runs from July 1 – June 30, so if you are applying for E-Rate FY2012 the plan must cover July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013.

The approved plan must include a sufficient level of information to validate the purpose of a Universal Service Fund request (E-Rate application). An approved technology plan does not have to include the specific details on required on the Description of Services Requested and Certification Form (Form 470), the Services Ordered and Certification Form (Form 471), the Receipt of Service Confirmation Form (Form 486), and the Adjustment to Commitment and Modification to Receipt of Service Confirmation Form (Form 500).

## Questions to think about while writing to meet the required elements for approval for E-Rate:

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### **1) The plan must establish clear goals and a realistic strategy for using telecommunications and information technology to improve education or library services;**

- a) What goals have you identified in your library service or school improvement plan?
- b) What accompanying strategies have already been identified to reach those goals?
- c) What specific telecommunications and information technologies (such as access to the Internet, access to remote databases, distance learning, etc.) are useful in helping you reach those goals?
- d) What are the specific resources (e.g., trainers, selected curricular software, Internet access, links to subscribed databases, etc.) that you plan to help reach your goals for improved teaching and learning or improved library service?

### **2) The plan must have a professional development strategy to ensure that staff know how to use these new technologies to improve education or library services;**

- a) What are the specific resources and strategies that you plan to implement to ensure that your staff is ready to use and maintain the telecommunications and information technologies?
- b) Who will be in charge of coordinating the professional development activities?
- c) Are there in-service slots set aside for technology-related professional development?
- d) Will the professional development be required for all that use it, or is it optional? If optional, what incentives exist to encourage teachers and librarians to pick up these new skills?
- e) What models of professional development would work in your organization to train your staff?
- f) What professional development opportunities and resources exist for your technical staff?
- g) Do you have the resources in house to train these staff members or do they need to go to outside courses, or a combination of the two?
- h) What financial and time resources exist to keep the staff up to date in learning about new technologies?
- i) What professional development opportunities are available from outside sources (such as service providers, courses at institutions of higher education, conferences, courses delivered via distance learning or over the Internet; courses sponsored by your state education or library agency)?
- j) What professional development opportunities and resources exist for your professional staff (i.e., teachers or librarians) to ensure that they can not only use the new

technologies, but to use them to deliver improved teaching and learning or improved library services?

- k) What classes or seminars are available to your staff on an ongoing basis within your organization?
- l) Can your staff meet with others who are already further along in implementing technology in another school or library?
- m) What professional development is available from service providers?
- n) What professional development opportunities are available from out sources (such as service providers, courses at institutions of higher education, conferences, courses delivered via distance learning or over the Internet; courses sponsored by your state education or library agency)?

**3) The plan must include an assessment of the telecommunication services, hardware, software, and other services that will be needed to improve education or library services; and**

**4) The plan must include an evaluation process that enables the school or library to monitor progress toward the specified goals and make mid-course corrections in response to new developments and opportunities and they arise.**

- a) How frequently will you update the plan?
- b) Who is responsible for updating the plan?
- c) How will you determine if the technology plan was successful in meeting the goals of your institutional plans, i.e. your school improvement plan or your library service plan (e.g., interview/survey staff, patrons, other stakeholders; measuring progress made towards the benchmarks you set out in your goals; observations)?
- d) What goals and objectives of the technology plan were you able to meet? To what extent?
- e) Were there any unexpected outcomes or benefits to having the technology in place?
- f) What goals and objectives of the technology plan did you not meet? Why? Are there ways to overcome these barriers?
- g) What is the plan for meeting unmet goals and objectives?
- h) Are there other needs that have emerged since you last wrote/revised your plan? If so, what are they?
- i) Are there any goals and objectives that are no longer relevant to your situation and should be deleted from the plan?
- j) What developments in technology have emerged that you can take advantage of to improve education or library service for your school or community? How do you identify potentially useful new technologies (e.g., attending conferences, reading publications, and networking with peers)?

**5) [Beginning with FY2011, this element is not required] The plan must provide a sufficient budget to acquire and support the non-discounted elements of the plan: the hardware, software, professional development and other services that will be needed to implement the strategy.**

## Example Evaluation Form

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Name of Library: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Recommend approval as submitted: \_\_\_\_\_ Recommend approval pending revisions: \_\_\_\_\_

Successful Technology Plans align the overall education or library service improvement objectives with the following four criteria. To qualify as an approved Technology Plan for a Universal Service Program discount the plan must meet these criteria. It is critical that technology planning not be viewed or treated as a separate exercise dealing primarily with hardware and telecommunications infrastructure. There must be connections between the proposed physical infrastructure of the information technology and the plan for professional development curriculum reform and library service improvements.

- ☐ The Plan establishes clear goals and a realistic strategy for using telecommunications and information technology to improve education or library services.
  - ☐ details actual steps to be taken (strategies) to reach broad outcomes (goals)
- ☐ The Plan has a professional development strategy to ensure that staff knows how to use the new technologies to improve education or library services.
  - ☐ Discusses staff training or staff knowledge in technology areas such as the online catalog, online databases and Internet search engines?
  - ☐ Are some staff trained on specific applications
  - ☐ What methods are employed for continuing education for staff in areas of technology (i.e. CE events through RLS, State Library, online tutorials, etc.)
  - ☐ Is technology training offered to the public?
  - ☐ Discusses who does the training (staff, volunteers, outside vendor)
  - ☐ Discusses types of training offered
- ☐ The Plan includes an assessment of the telecommunication services, hardware, software, and other services that will be needed to improve education or library services.
  - ☐ Includes information on complete range of technology services, including basic telecommunications
- ☐ The Plan includes an evaluation process that enables the school or library to monitor progress toward the specified goals and make mid-course corrections in response to new developments and opportunities as they arise.
  - ☐ Indicates how frequently the plan will be reviewed and updated
  - ☐ Indicates a methodology to assess how technology has improved library services to staff and customers
  - ☐ Indicates a method to assess if strategies have been met and if not, why not

## Resources

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USAC: Universal Service Administrative Company, "Step 2: Technology Planning,"  
<http://www.usac.org/sl/applicants/step02/technology-planning/>

USAC: Universal Service Administrative Company, "Step 2: Questions to Consider in Technology Planning," <http://www.usac.org/sl/applicants/step02/technology-planning/questions-consider-technology-planning.aspx>

USAC: Universal Service Administrative Company, "Step 2: Frequently Asked Questions about Technology Planning," <http://www.usac.org/sl/applicants/step02/faq-about-technology-planning.aspx>